

Separate Attachment  
- 10104, 26 May 1967

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

SUBJECT : Special Assessment on Vietnam

A draft Special Assessment on Vietnam, which I saw briefly, made the following points:

1. The allies are making progress, especially against larger units, but "formidable obstacles" are in the way of further progress.

2. North Vietnam has the capacity to continue fighting for a long time.

3. War in the South:

a. US has achieved "statistically impressive results" in men killed and stores destroyed, and has seriously damaged the Headquarters and logistical structure of the VC, especially Corps Areas 2 and 3. Desertions were up to 20,242 in 1966, but:

b. These results may be misleading. North Vietnam claims the US has touched only a fraction of their supplies in Tay Ninh; a large part of the military defectors in 1966 were local force guerrillas; the VC seem able to maintain the strength of their main force units.

c. The main threat to the allies is that posed by the four, possibly five, North Vietnamese divisions in the south and the DMZ.

4. Pacification:

a. Progress is "appallingly slow"; efforts to restore government administrative control are encountering "great difficulties"; and

b. South Vietnamese troops are unable to protect the Revolutionary Development Teams.

### 5. The North:

a. The chief allied objective is to make the war seem unprofitable to North Vietnam.

b. Though the effectiveness of the bombing cannot be quantified, it has slowed the movement of men and troops and has caused a large-scale diversion of men (possibly 300,000) and materials to repair and construction.

c. The economy has been "seriously affected," but morale seems to remain "very high." Indeed, the bombing has strengthened morale and unified the country as nothing else would have.

### 6. Outlook:

a. The allies probably can keep main force enemy units on the defensive;

b. Increasing enemy emphasis on guerilla tactics is likely;

c. North Vietnam can expect only "ephemeral" military successes in 1967;

d. There is "no sign whatever" of any North Vietnamese interest in talks leading to a cessation of fighting; and

e. North Vietnam probably calculates the war can be kept at present level at least until the November 1968 US elections.

### 7. Conclusions:

a. In the South, allied action has disrupted major North Vietnamese/VC units and kept the rest on the defensive;

b. VC logistics and communications have suffered some damage;

c. Slow allied progress is likely; and

d. North Vietnam, with Bloc aid, has the will and the resources to continue fighting for a long time.

The above differs at several points with the previous (January 27) Special Assessment on Vietnam:

1. War in the South: The earlier assessment emphasized the "very heavy" casualties inflicted on North Vietnam and VC main force units, while the current assessment distinguishes the actual from the statistical results (see 3 above).

2. The North: The January assessment noted evidence of a decline in morale associated with the bombing, but also mentioned the possibility that will and unity would be strengthened by it. In the current assessment the latter result has hardened into an estimate. (See 5c above.)

3. Outlook: The earlier assessment said it was "reasonable to suppose" disagreement between Hanoi's hawks and doves. It further implied Soviet pressure pro negotiation and Chinese pressure against; hence, it was estimated that if China seemed about to collapse, North Vietnam might decide to negotiate. Neither of these propositions is contained in the current estimate. (See 6d above.)

In other important respects, the two assessments seem to be reasonably close.

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